

THOUGHTS

ON THE

WORK OF GRACE

IN THE

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ONE IN A JUSTIFIED STATE.

I N A

LETTER TO A FRIEND.

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L O N D O N :

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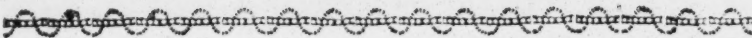
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## THOUGHTS, &c.

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DEAR BROTHER,

**T**O encourage you what I can, I set about this arduous task, of which I know myself very incompetent; but resting on Christ as my wisdom, have hope of being so instructed, by his word and Spirit, as that what I write shall not be found useless. The soul we now speak of, is conscious it has had a realized work of the Spirit in sincere repentance; has been shewed the way of salvation by faith in the Son of God, and has with all its powers most willingly embraced it. Had an incontestable evidence it was reconciled to the Father through the Son, by the witness and powerful workings of the Holy Ghost. It had liberty also to look into that amazing love of God, in giving his only Son to make an atonement for the sins of mankind, and to that no less wonderful love of Jesus Christ in freely offering himself a sacrifice for us. But what increased this wonder is that itself should have a part in this great transaction, saying, He hath loved me, and given himself for me. I, even I have redemption in his blood, the forgiveness of sins.

sins. The joy it felt in all this is beyond description. It walked in this liberty for some weeks or months, nor could it believe it should ever feel evil any more, for it found the love of God wholly possess it, so that day and night it had a constant delight in him. Whether it is in the power of the soul to abide in this delightful state I cannot determine, but sure I am the most do not, and yet I think mere self-love would engage us to keep it, if we could. But however it may please God to exempt a few, the generality of believers, according to the scriptures, are called out to fight the battles of the Lord, against satan, the world, and sin. And as this appears to be the determinate will of God, that he may be glorified, and Jesus exalted by the soul in time and eternity, therefore is the soul gradually led to an acquaintance with itself, in the knowledge of its inbred corruption. Not that it was altogether ignorant of it, yet what it knew of it at the time of repentance was but in the gross; now it is to be led to know its every part, and the quality of every such part. Now commences the struggle for life. From this time the soul and satan are striving for the victory. In order to obtain which, we are exhorted to put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand in the evil day. And what a blessed word is that---take no thought for the morrow. What a relief to the soul in this its Christian warfare. If it can obtain this liberty (and I am sure it can) it has as it were half overcome itself, and all its spiritual enemies. It is not possible to



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conceive the advantage there is gained, in confining our hopes and fears to this day only. Experience teaches the soul, by this to know its own weakness. To observe its slips or falls. The strength of its corruption, and the subtilty and power of the enemy, and how to make use of its spiritual weapons with the greatest advantage.

My brother, set yourself to pray for this, I know the Lord will give it you. I have not in this sense had a second day for near forty years. By this also you will be accustomed to observe your conduct towards God and man, and the advantages got over the world, and every evil desire to which you find your soul inclined. At night you will be humbled before the Lord, for what has been amiss in the day. And thus by daily washing in the laver of the blood of Jesus, lay yourself down in peace. As much of your close walking with God depends on this daily and close examination, I pray you never omit it. I know its benefit in the tenderness of conscience it inspires, and the fear of offending or grieving the Spirit, as also the advantage the soul gets over all the wiles of the adversary, and its own unbelieving fears. I have dwelt the longer on this, as knowing the importance of the advice, and the good resulting from it if it be accepted, and put in practice. For you have a fight to fight, a race to run, and an enemy to oppose, and to conquer, who is quite well acquainted with every weakness and evil disposition of your soul. And as all the evil in the fallen soul is the devil's own works, he must certainly know how to suit his temptations

to the nature of those his works. He is also an implacable, revengeful, miserable and restless spirit, and endeavours by all his power and subtilty, to revenge himself on the followers of Jesus, for his expulsion out of heaven. But thou art a believer. Know thy privilege. For greater is He that is in thee than all those that are against thee. Glorify Him then in relying on Him as thy Saviour and Deliverer. Make thy request to Him at all times, remembring that prayer binds the armour close about thee, discovers and frustrates all the dark schemes of satan, and gives thee power over them. By prayer thou dost testify thy faith and dependence on God thy Saviour. Beware thou listen to no temptation that would disengage thee from, or make thee reason on the matter or manner of thy prayer, as that prayer is always accepted of God where the understanding is engaged, and the soul feels its own wants. Nay, if thou art overcome by sin, go to prayer. Stay not any time away from Him who knoweth thee; who alone can let thee know the nature of thy sin, and give thee repentance for it. So shalt thou get more understanding and strength, see more into the nature and power of faith, and not so easily give place to the devil. And now, being thus armed and instructed by the Word and Spirit of God, you are able to look sin in the face, and to consider it in all its gigantic forms. Your own closest besetting sin comes first in view, and makes its appearance at almost all times and places. This God wisely orders for the trial of faith, and for the knowledge of the deep-rooted nature of

evil

evil in your soul. If pride be the general prevail-  
 ing evil of the fallen soul, it draws with it, or  
 rather there are rooted in it, a number of deplora-  
 ble evils, as stubbornness, self-will, idolatry, self-  
 love, anger, revenge, &c. And this pride may well  
 be called the mother-root of all evil, as it is the  
 first discovered and the last destroyed. What need  
 now of faith and patience, to encounter all those  
 lusts and passions the soul finds daily discovered in  
 it! What different thoughts now spring up, and  
 how does faith, hope, desire and fear by turns  
 cheer or depress the spirit! But what the soul has  
 most to look at, and guard against, is unbelief.  
 This many-headed monster will be ever making  
 its appearance. And how amazing it is that the  
 consciously justified soul should so often fall under  
 its baneful influence, to the dishonour of its Lord,  
 and the stain of its Christian character. Yet how  
 hard to give such advice as will help the soul in  
 time of need; seeing they that are happily freed from  
 it know its deep-rooted evil, deep as in-bred sin;  
 nor can it be wholly conquered till sin be totally  
 destroyed. But must it be submitted to, because  
 it cannot without a stroke of Omnipotence be  
 rooted out? God forbid. For if so, why not  
 give place to every sin we are tempted to? Is not  
 Jesus Christ as able to save from the power of  
 unbelief as of any other sin? Why then is he not  
 applied to when we are under this temptation?  
 His glory, so to speak, seems more concerned in  
 this respect to this, as certainly it is great dishonour  
 to Him not to believe his word; yea, many  
 times to give credit to the adversary more than to  
 Him.

Him. The truth is, unbelief is not laid to heart in the manner it ought to be. We at times feel the want of peace, power and love, but ascribe it to any thing rather than unbelief. Does the soul remember Jesus is the Corner-stone of the building, the rock of salvation; the name by which alone we can be saved? And here I cannot but remark a strange religious phenomenon that I observed in myself, and many other believers. At the time of our first love no one of the Trinity seemed to engross our affection like the Son of God. The name of Jesus was precious. To Him we cleaved. He was the joy and delight of our souls; because we knew He had loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood. But when our natural corruption was discovered, unbelief strangely took place, and we almost forgot the name of Jesus the Saviour; and this is still the main cause of our daily complainings. Did we but daily advert to what we really are in the estimation of God, we should not be so cast down, or give place to the suggestions of satan in the manner we do. Are we not really reconciled to God by the death of his Son? Are we not hereby become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ? Are we not one body with Him, partakers, as the apostle says, of His flesh, and of His bones? He our head, and we His members? He the vine, and we the branches?

Now adverting to these strong similitudes as we ought to do, (for it is to His glory) would not comfort and consolation take place in the soul, and distrust and tormenting fear be removed?

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But my corruptions are so strong, says the soul, and all these corruptions have (as I feel) a peculiar enmity to Jesus Christ, how then can I with any confidence come to Him, while I am so corrupt and contrary to Him? Dost thou not know, or wilt thou not remember and consider, that the Lord the Almighty God altereth not? What He was to thee when He justified thee freely by His grace, that He is to thee at this day. Let Him take thee then, and give thee to know and feel the very nature of a devil, and give thee also to know this is thine.

True—but the guilt of sin is gone, and the power removed (For I speak to the conscious believer, who lives in the commission of no sin, nor the omission of any known duty). Why then must God be of the same mind with thee, and why must He see sin in thee with the same guiltiness thou seeest it? Has He not transferred it all on His own Son? And does He not acknowledge that He has received a sufficient satisfaction? What art thou doing of, then? Por- ing upon the guiltiness of thy sin, where there is none? Believe this, or believe thy Saviour a little god, and that the sacrifice of Himself was not adequate to the guiltiness of all thy sin. Dost thou shudder at this? Shudder then at thy unbelief: for this it is that ungod's Him with thee. Give glory to God in believing; then shalt thou go on thy way with joy and gladness of heart. Light is sown for the righteous, and God hath constituted thee a righteous soul, and looketh always upon thee as such. He never sees thee now as a

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polluted soul to condemnation, but beholds thee as united to His Son, and, for His sake, always well pleasing in His sight. I say always, for thou art careful to avoid all occasions of displeasing Him.

And now, if thou canst believe it, for it must be true, there is no angel in heaven does the will of God more than thou now dost; neither will the Captain of thy salvation be ever better pleased with thee than He is in this day. If I may be allowed to say so, God our Saviour shews you as a miracle to angels. For is it any thing less, to see a soul just escaped out of the power of the devil, set itself, by the grace of God, against that prince of darkness, and all his infernal legions, and this at a time, it may be, when it sees itself the most like them it ever did?

My brother, struggle on, fight the good fight: for as sure as Christ liveth for you and in you, you shall come off victorious, and this time shall never be forgotten, no, not in eternity. Remember to him that overcometh are the great promises made, as are largely spoken of in the Revelation. Believe me, thou hast no cause to envy those whom God leads in a smoother path; for thou art called to a more honourable post in his army. And though thou art not called out to suffer martyrdom in His cause, yet wilt thou please Him as well, if thou suffer Him to kill, and utterly destroy the old man in thee. For this He requires thy constant hearty will and consent. He will certainly do this for thee, and for this very end He is come to live in thee by His Spirit.

But

But thou must be a worker together with him for this. Thy work is a diligent attendance on the means of grace, praying earnestly and constantly, that thou mayest be spiritual in the use of them. If thou hast any dependence on them, thou wilt be unsatisfied if thou dost not find that comfort from them thou didst expect. In themselves they are nothing, neither art thou called to expect good from them. They are, as St. Paul speaks, in themselves a shadow, but the body or substance is of Christ. The believer is called to have fellowship with Christ in the use of these, and this he is principally to look to. Our God is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to creatures. Our hearts are his temple, there he expects we should find him, and no where else. Fix thyself on him, and thou wilt get away from the works of the law. The means are works of the law, when they are depended on, or hoped in for good. But they are works of faith as we advert to Jesus, the life and spirit of them. We must carry this faith through every work we are called to, even the works of our particular calling. By an attendance to this, we get to know how to live a life of faith. For having this living oracle within us, we are led more and more to consult it in all things. This is that faith which, kept in a pure conscience, is of so great efficacy to the soul in its Christian warfare, and of which so great things are spoken, and to which the promises are annexed, that to the believer are all yea and amen. Here you see then the one thing needful for us is Jesus. In him

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But

we have the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost ; all bearing testimony to all the œconomy of God our Saviour on earth, and of all the gracious work in the souls of those who believe. We may say then, if God be for us who can be against us ? What shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus ? Why fear we then the way of the oppressor ? What can wicked spirits do against us, who have God so near us ? Their works while they abide give us pain, but cannot separate us from the love of Christ, whose blood shall cleanse our souls from every stain and spot of sin. Let us then be courageous, and conflict still with sin and satan, hoping and expecting a speedy deliverance from all his works and all his power. Thus far we have considered the soul as sensible of the works of the devil in it, and the sure way of getting deliverance from all his works and all his power. But we are to overcome him, as he is stiled the god of this world. Here his government is great, and his subjects many, and all combined in closest league against the followers of the holy Jesus, and who will do their utmost by force or fraud to stop us in our race, or make our way bitter and painful. We have need herein to know we have armour of proof, that we go not out against these numerous foes without our sword and shield. The word of God is never of greater benefit to us than in our endeavour to overcome the world. This our Lord manifests in his temptation by the devil. It is for the want of the knowledge of these living oracles, that so many are carried away by its vanities,

vanities, and others seduced by fears and cares. We who believe should endeavour to be imitators of the poor and despised Jesus, who had not where to lay his head. We call him Master and Lord, and profess to be his followers, let us not then deny to be taught of him. He has told us, if we forsake not houses and lands, and all that we have, we cannot be his disciples, that is, we cannot be saved by him. It is strange that any who have tasted the good word, and felt the powers of the world to come, and have been partakers of the heavenly gift of justifying grace, should ever turn again to the beggarly elements of this life, and prefer the love of money, or any thing that money can purchase, to the love of Jesus. Nay we should hardly give credit to the scriptures respecting this, if we did not see it evidenced in our day, and by those also who have been, or perhaps are now among us. But this comes from the ignorance we have of the word of God; we have not made it our daily study, therefore it has not taken deep root in the mind, for it is not possible to believe the scriptures to be of God, and act in that manner. But it appears to be contrary to the natural love we have to ourselves, in that we knowingly, and as it were deliberately, let go a greater good for a less. But we see how the god of this world blindeth the minds of those that believe not. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished: for how very few of these return to their first love. And though it may be God does not utterly reject them, yet what lamentation and mourning



mourning has been seen with them, at the time of their decease, and how has the awakened conscience then filled them with horrible fear of the displeasure of God, for their past conduct towards him. And though of his tender mercy he forgave their sins, yet what a loss of glory will they for ever sustain. But all have not obtained the grace of repentance, and to these how dreadful the Fall. But riches, or the pleasures indulged by them, is not the only things our Lord bids us beware of; the cares also of this world, and the desire of other things, he says, choak the word and make it unfruitful. This seems spoken to believers, who have received the seed of the gospel, and in whom it did abide, but did not bring forth fruit unto holiness. The reason was, they did not keep the faith. In the time of trial they did not look to Jesus, but to second causes, and so dishonoured their head; forsook their rock, and plunged themselves into distress and affliction, which brought darkness, unbelief, and distrust upon the mind. This not being attended to as the sin of the soul, and it not returning to God, under a consciousness of the guilt contracted, it could not proceed in its Christian course, being stopt by the powers of darkness, working up the mind against God, as no friend to the soul, because he suffered it to be so tempted and afflicted. So nature joining with the devil, leaves God and goes over to the world. Yet are these brought back with more ease than the former. For having wearied themselves in their own ways, and finding nothing but discomfort

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in the world, their backslidings reproving them, they again seek the Lord, and he is graciously found of them.

Indeed they that pursue the desire of other things, not being satisfied with the love of Christ, though not rich, yet desiring and striving to be so, may be ranked with them, and no doubt are so by our Lord, and the justice of God must take place on the one as on the other. Here you see, my brother, what we escape who believe the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus. And I am a witness for God, that he gives a thousand fold even in this life. And this he does by giving an increase of faith to the soul in and under every weight and affliction of spirit, he in his providence brings, or suffers to come upon it. It is not possible to know but by experience, how the attention to the providence of God, helps the soul to believe his word, and to rely on him for its daily bread, both for soul and body. Herein is the great advantage they have, whose situation requires their dependence on God for their daily support, over them that are not so circumstanced. They more immediately rely and depend on God their Father and friend, and go to him in that relation, with all the simplicity of children. Their frequent returns of answers to prayer, at times does so confound them, that they have no conception or words to express their sense of the favor of God towards them. But what an intercourse does this open between God and the soul! what an holy familiarity does it produce! From these he will withhold nothing that may conduce

conduce to their increase in the knowledge of his word and will, but gives them to know the nature of true spiritual worship, and the way to keep it. They, when they taste the sweets of it, are drawn out more towards it, and endeavour to get free from every thing that would obstruct or hinder the loving communion they have with the Lord. Therefore they let the word of God make all that impression on their minds he is willing it should. They love the light and walk in it. They bring their thoughts, desires, words, and works before God, to know whether or not they are approved of before him. Their conscience is very tender, they see and feel the least touch of evil, and are careful not to give place, but if overtaken, fly instantly to the blood of Jesus, not resting till they know the offence is forgiven. These are the chosen of the Lord, in the world, but not of the world, but crucified to it, and they to the world. The Lord having led them thus far, now gives them to be more acquainted with the nature of self-love, and how strongly and constantly it works in the hearts of his own children. This is evidenced by our constant desire of a smoother path to the kingdom of heaven, than the scriptures will allow us, or our Lord's example, and that of his holy apostles give us room to hope for. When ever we walk out of the narrow way, our consciences smart for it, and shame covers our faces before the Lord. We find it better for us to press forward, continually striving to overcome ourselves, and to get the mind that was in Christ, who sought not his own glory, nor did his own will,

will, but the will and glory of his heavenly Father. This we must have an eye to in all our daily walk before God.

Self seeking and self pleasing, in the ways of God, are quite contrary to all the tenor of the gospel, derogatory to the glory of God, and injurious to our peace and prosperity in the divine life. But how hard a work utterly to forsake ourselves, and live absolutely dependent on God for his carrying on this great work in the soul, no one knows, but he that experiences the opposition nature makes, and that from ignorance, though not known so to be at that time. Hence arises our bitter complaints against ourselves, because we are not one part of a week what we were the other, or one part of a day what we are the other, though we endeavour and aim at pleasing God at all times. Various times, and in many ways do these trials come, before the soul sees God is in all this, that it is to root and ground it more in faith and dependence on Jesus, and take it altogether away from itself. But here the Lord shews the soul, that these weaknesses must continue, and itself be subject to many, and grievous temptations from the devil, except it be delivered from inbred sin: of this the soul is truly sensible, as having at times found it an heavy burthen. But understanding it to be the will of the Lord to deliver it, gives itself no rest, but day and night makes its humble and earnest request to him, that it may be a partaker of this great salvation, and the Lord is graciously pleased to hear and answer his own spirit's cry in the soul, and

and give it an undeniable testimony of his having done this great work. And now having an inward liberty, it never before enjoyed, and such a degree of love, which for its power and extensiveness in the soul, it never before felt, it longs to be all that God would have it be, finding itself capable of doing the will of God, in a manner it never could do, as unbelief is altogether removed. But the wicked Spirit will do all he can to disturb the soul, and unfix it from its rock, by false suggestions; as that it has deceived itself, in respect of the work it thinks there is done in it, yet is it only its own imagination that is worked up to believe what is not really effected in it, as it will know in a little time. But this, to a soul instructed as this hath been in the work of grace, will be of little weight. For as it has been accustomed to prove all the work, hitherto wrought in it to be of God, so doth it at this time also, not being satisfied if it has not every day the witness of the spirit, and the power of the spirit, to live fully and wholly to the Lord. And as to that other temptation, that it will soon lose what it now has, and be worse than before, the soul to-day leaves that with the Lord, and goes on its way rejoicing. But the most subtle and powerful temptation is, the enemy endeavours to lift up the soul with spiritual pride. Here, indeed, it must look well to itself, that it give no place to self-pleasing imagination, but examine every thought and desire, not trusting to itself, but praying earnestly, and constantly, that it may not be deceived. By this means it will daily go on,



on, growing in grace, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God. When it is somewhat strengthened, and gives glory to God, in believing and obeying his word, he is pleased to try it more inwardly, by giving it to feel a lively sense of its own poverty. It had many times prayed it might be poor, and base and vile in its own eyes, and somewhat of this it did know, but now God would let it feel the nature of all these. In this discovery he does indeed glorify himself, and make the creature possess its own nothingness. This he does not do by men, or books, but he teaches and convinces the soul by his own Spirit's work, of which it becomes as truly sensible as of any work that heretofore had been wrought in it. Yet the struggle of the soul to submit itself fully to the will of God in this his work is great; for it had conceived it should have, as it were, a redundancy of wisdom, power, and love, if it were free from inbred corruption. But God knows where we are, and what we are, and how to secure us from the malice and subtlety of our spiritual enemies, and knows this is one effectual means. But the blessing this work brings with it, is beyond all that went before; for in this the soul gradually loses itself in God, and Christ, as the soul desired, becomes all in all to it. In all this the will of God is to bring the soul nearer to himself, according to his own infinite wisdom and goodness. But this he does in a way we would not chuse, as he at times removes that delightful sense the soul has of his presence and love, in order more deeply to impress it with a lively sense of

of its own imbecility; **THAT IT IS NOTHING BUT WHAT HE MADE IT; AND MUST FALL, UNLESS HE SUPPORT IT.** Here is no room to say the Lord never withdraws his presence but for sin. His presence is not here withdrawn, for he now works in the soul, in as loving and powerful a manner as at any former time. But how wilt thou be persuaded to believe this, at the time thou art exercised with so keen a sense of thy helplessness and ignorance, that thou art ready to think, thou art the most ignorant of all the children of God, and fearest thou shalt be a disgrace to the gospel, as finding such an inability at those times to support thyself, or do any thing for God as thou didst, and hast a desire to do. Thou art also sensible of thy littleness of love to Christ, and zeal for his glory, so that thou thinkest thou hast none at all; yet thou knowest in thy heart thou lovest him, and him alone.

But this is not long the case: light breaketh out from obscurity, and the soul is abundantly happier than ever, and by degrees gets wisdom to discern the end the Lord has in exercising the soul in this manner. That being altogether emptied of itself, he may live, and reign, and work in it, all the counsel of his own will, till he has fitted it to live with him in everlasting glory. Never was Jesus Christ so precious to thee, as under this knowledge of thyself in these circumstances. Now it is thou seeest into the liberty of the children of God, and feelest the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burthen light. Now thou truly lovest God, and seekest his glory in all thy works,  
especially

especially in respect of the work of grace, either in thy own soul or others. Thou art no bigot, but art well pleased if the work of God be but carried on, whether in the people thou art in fellowship with, or with others. Or if thou be in any office of love, and God prefer another before thee in his work, thou art pleased and thankful.

Thus it is the soul falls into the mind of Christ, and gets a disposition to please him in all things. I need say nothing of relative duties, as the soul thus taught of God will be found in them, according to its situation and abilities.

I have brought this letter to a great length, yet cannot conclude without saying something in respect of marriage, as we have had lamentable instances of unequal marriages among us. But thou art a child of God, and as such knowest thy obligation to, and dependence on, thy heavenly Father. You know he is wise, and seeth into future contingencies; therefore you will not stir a step in this great affair without consulting him, as knowing thy future peace of mind, and prosperity of soul, depends in great measure on this transaction. If when you look upon a woman, and think you should like her for a wife, speak not one word concerning the affair to her before thou hast consulted thy Father, who knoweth the motive in thee, and also the very soul of her thou hast a desire after. If thou findest an inward liberty from him, and his outward providence in respect to her agree, then thou mayest proceed, the Lord is with thee. But do not play the hypocrite with him in this, which some have done,

done, taking  of their own inclination for the  But this should be thy witness;  communion with him, in the beginning, and continuance of all this transaction. Then thou wilt be sure nature prevailed not, but God was the first and the last, and thou didst marry with a lively sense of his approbation. The almost natural consequence of such a union must be happiness; at least as much as can be expected in this world of sin and sorrow. These also have a living hope, of an eternal union with their living head, Christ Jesus.

Your affectionate Brother,  
in our only Lord Jesus,

G. CLARK.





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